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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. Anti-Terrorism Efforts

Key stories in the media:

Leading media reported that the White House made clear in a statement yesterday ([http:// www.whitehouse.gov / the-press-office / statement-white-house-press-secretary-robert- gibbs- construction-east-jerusalem](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/statement-white-house-press-secretary-robert-gibbs-construction-east-jerusalem)) that it opposes new Israeli construction in East Jerusalem. "Neither party should engage in efforts or take actions that could unilaterally preempt, or appear to preempt, negotiations. Rather, both parties should return to negotiations without preconditions as soon as possible," White House spokesman Robert Gibbs was quoted as saying in a statement. Gibbs was referring to the plan to build 692 housing units in the Jewish neighborhoods of Neve Yaakov, Har Homa, and Pisgat Ze'ev in East Jerusalem. HaQaretz quoted a senior official in PM Benjamin Netanyahu's bureau as saying: "Everything was carried out with transparency vis-a-vis the Americans, even if there are disagreements." The official added that Netanyahu has said that construction in Jerusalem would not be restricted. Maariv quoted a senior GOI official in Jerusalem as saying that the government's move was coordinated in advance with the U.S.

The Jerusalem Post, HaQaretz, and other media reported that the "terms of reference" for restarting diplomatic discussions with the Palestinians are expected to be the main focus of PM Netanyahu's discussions with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt today, amid signs that Special U.S. Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell has made inroads on this matter. Mitchell, who hasn't been here since early November but has continued talks with Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in the U.S., is due back in early January and is expected to bring with him a document that would provide a basis for relaunching the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. The Jerusalem Post reported that AFP, in a story filed from Cairo,

quoted an Arab diplomat as saying that Mitchell would present "two draft letters of guarantee, one for Israel and one to the Palestinian Authority, during his next visit to the region." "The U.S. is hoping that the two letters will serve as a basis for the relaunch of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, but we don't know if they will satisfy the Palestinians, who want a complete freeze of settlement activity before talks resume," the diplomat was quoted as saying. One senior Israeli diplomatic source told The Jerusalem Post that the terms of reference Mitchell is reportedly bringing would probably closely resemble the statement Secretary of State Hillary Clinton released soon after Netanyahu announced his 10-month housing-start moratorium in the West Bank. "We believe," that statement read, "that through good-faith negotiations the parties can mutually agree on an outcome which ends the conflict and reconciles the Palestinian goal of an independent and viable state based on the 1967 lines, with agreed swaps, and the Israeli goal of a Jewish state with secure and recognized borders that reflect subsequent developments and meet Israeli security requirements." Israel Radio, which echoed the main media reports, reported that National Infrastructure Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer (Labor), National Security Advisor Uzi Arad, and Netanyahu assistant Attorney Yitzhak Molcho, accompany the PM to Egypt. The radio noted that the Egyptians may be interested to hear from Molcho, who is Netanyahu's liaison with the U.S., what the Americans think about the peace process. Yediot says that Netanyahu will ask Mubarak to pressure the Palestinians.

All media reported that yesterday, in a stormy Kadima Knesset faction, party head Tzipi Livni succeeded in uniting her party behind a statement rejecting Netanyahu's offer for Kadima to join his government coalition without impacting its policies or its makeup. The faction unanimously endorsed a national unity government, but only in a true partnership. All media reported that Livni bashed Netanyahu's gutter politics. The media, which say that the tug-of-war between Netanyahu and Livni will continue, cited senior Likud members' criticism of Netanyahu's attempted move as debasing to their party.

HaQaretz and Yediot quoted Shin Bet chief Yuval Diskin as saying yesterday that closing the Shalit deal will be a great achievement for Hamas but that it will not bring down PA President Mahmoud Abbas. Speaking to Israeli ambassadors gathered at the Foreign Ministry, Diskin said that Shin Bet does not believe a third Intifada is about to break out in the territories at this stage. Israel Radio reported that Diskin told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that although the situation in the West Bank is currently quiet, violence could erupt if currently detained Fatah

leader Marwan Barghouti becomes head of the PA and if other Palestinians are released.

Major media quoted DM Ehud Barak as saying yesterday at a session of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that Iran's nuclear facility at Qom would withstand a regular bombing and that the free world is not supportive enough of Iranian protestors.

Israel Radio quoted Moussa Abu Marzouk, the deputy head of Hamas political bureau, as saying in an interview with the Saudi newspaper Al-Watan that his organization does not want war with Israel and that such a war does not serve Hamas.

Israel Radio reported that Qatom spy Q Mordecai Vanunu, whose freedom has been restricted since he was released from jail in 2004, was arrested yesterday after he met with a female Norwegian citizen.

On December 25, The Jerusalem Post reported that a dispute is rumbling between Israel and the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem after a U.S. diplomatic car allegedly tried running over a Defense Ministry security guard recently at an IDF checkpoint in the West Bank.

The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that a large-scale emergency drill will take place at Ben Gurion Airport today.

1. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

1. QObama's Luck

Washington correspondent Natasha Mozgovaya wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (12/29): QOnly a miracle prevented a disaster,Q it was said after the attempted terrorist attack on Delta-Northwest Airlines Flight 253. A passenger, Jasper Schuringa, who jumped on the terrorist as he was trying to set off an explosive device, not only saved his fellow passengers but also the first year of U.S. President Barack Obama's tenure. The last thing Obama would have needed was to devote his State of the Union address next month to the first big terrorist attack on American soil since September 11, 2001. The incident reveals just how delicate a situation the President with the ambitious agenda finds himself in.... Obama does not have time.... With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that has been pushed to the sidelines of the presidential agenda, Obama has missed at least two opportunities to present a peace plan.

The PLO representative in Washington has told HaQaretz that the Palestinians do not need a new plan. QThere are already sufficient parameters on the table to renew the negotiations,Q he said. If Obama is thinking about acting without waiting for ideal conditions, as he has done on a number of other issues, this is the right time to present his plan.

II. QWhy Netanyahu Wants Livni

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (12/29): QAccording to [former left-wing politician Yossi] Beilin, whose sources are the envy of every diplomatic correspondent, Netanyahu has agreed that the negotiations with the Palestinians will be based on the 1967 borders. This is one of the pillars of the statement of principles George Mitchell is slated to present during his next visit to the region in less than two weeks. Netanyahu is not trying to enlarge his government because a new war is threatening Israel's citizens. Rather, he is scared the peace process will threaten the wholeness of his government. He needs Kadima to fill the ranks that will empty in

the wake of the departure of his partners from Yisrael Beiteinu and the National Union, and perhaps also some members of the Likud. Netanyahu wants Livni inside so that she will not take advantage of the coalition's collapse and push him out of office. Because of an absence of basic trust between the two, Netanyahu is taking care not to reveal to her the details of the understandings formulated between him and the Obama administration. He has confined himself to a declaration of general faithfulness to his Bar-Ilan University speech.

III. QBully Diplomacy

Ha'aretz editorialized (12/29): QA few days after the Palestinian President declared publicly that a peace agreement based on the 1967 lines would end demands on Israel, [IsraelQs] Foreign Minister Qreached the conclusionQ that even returning to the Green Line would not lead to the end of the conflict. Using blunt language, Lieberman made clear to his ministryQs staff that his worldview is the one that represents Israel. The next day, Netanyahu told them that conditions were ripe for a renewal of negotiations with the Palestinians. This is not a question of differing nuances; the conflicting messages show an Israel given over to the hands of a bizarre government that is deceiving its citizens as well as its neighbors and friends around the world. Israel cannot allow itself to have an extreme and irresponsible politician like Lieberman as its showcase to the world. Lieberman's appointment as foreign minister is turning out to be one of Netanyahu's most serious mistakes in putting together his cabinet. If the Prime Minister really wants to move a peace initiative ahead and win the trust of the international community, he must correct this mistake and release Lieberman from his post.

IV. QWorking with the PA

Dov Weisglass, who was former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's top diplomatic advisor, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (12/29): Q[Last weekQs] heinous murder of Rabbi Meir Avshalom Hai called for speedy justice. Most likely the operational circumstances made it impossible to arrest the murderers and justified killing them. The many worrying indications of a resumption of terror acts in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank] justified a swift, precise, and forceful action, in order to deter properly those wishing to renew the acts of violence.... [However,] the decision-makers in Israel must not forget that without Palestinian security cooperation, Israel will find it very hard to maintain security o the level to which weQve become accustomed in rcent years. In similar circumstances in the futur, Israel must act in such a way as to prevent ordecrease as much as possible the affront to the Palestinian security organizations, unless this is absolutely essential. In the maze of Israeli-Palestinian relations, the (relative) quiet was fairly stable. Every effort must be made to preserve it.

IV. QThe Victory of Cruelty

Veteran journalist and television anchor Yaron London wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (12/28): QA year has passed since Operation Cast Lead. The region surrounding Gaza is calm and prosperous.... Hamas refrains from firing because it needs a timeout in order to establish its rule, rebuild the destructed houses, intensify its military power, and fulfill the Shalit deal. When its leaders feel that they have completed their missions, when they believe the time is right, they'll resume their attacks -- and maybe not. Perhaps they have learned their lesson. In any event, we cannot doubt the assertion that had we not sent a blow of fire to Gaza, Hamas would have continued firing.... The operation's results are the victory of cruelty. It's unfortunate. It brings us back to reality. It calls for conclusions. As time passes, the world, which as a short memory, will forget the harsh sights in Gaza, because more difficult sights, in other places in the world, will take up all the free space in the collective mind's hard drive. The Gazans will be the only ones to remember. If we are proven false, we must arouse their memory with fire. We must not return to the soaking-up strategy, which is aimed at collecting credit points in the international public opinion. It has been proven that our stock of points runs out several days after we deal our enemies a critical blow. It doesn't pay to wait. We will have to impose the disproportionate response quickly, even if the rocket interception measures are not fully developed by then. QDeterrence,Q as security experts say, Qmust be maintained.Q To this statement we should add

that the determination of the maintainers of deterrence must also be maintained.

12. Anti-Terrorism Efforts:

Block Quotes:

QRegarding the Obama Doctrine
Zalman Shoval, a senior Likud member and former ambassador to the U.S., wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (12/29): QA year into his term, Obama stresses that America has no intention to give up its status as leader of the free world and superpower power and -- although he does not say this explicitly -- he does not intend to renounce the United StatesQ role as policeman of the world.... He is not leaving any doubt that radical Israel terrorism is the main enemy of America and the entire enlightened world. These are not just words. America is prepared to act -- not only in Afghanistan. American forces are currently taking part in the liquidation of a large al-Qaida group in Yemen. To be brief, the key point in what is already called the QObama doctrineQ is that there are just wars that cannot be avoided and that responsible nations must also understand that military force sometimes plays a role in peace-keeping (not exactly the messages that Peace Now wanted to hear from the Nobel Peace Prize laureate).

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